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ABSTRACT

This small fact book explains both quantitatively and qualitatively why Maine must convert its technical college system into a community college system. The state ranks below the national average and last in New England for college attendance. One of the major factors in Maine's low college participation is the lack of a comprehensive community college system. Nationally, community colleges enroll nearly half of all college students and serve as a critical access point for working adults and low-and moderate-income students. Report highlights include (1) 68% of Maine employers are having difficulty finding skilled workers; (2) jobs requiring an associate degree or higher are increasing by nearly twice the rate of jobs needing less skilled workers; (3) each year, 45% of Maine high school graduates don't enroll in college; (4) 90,000 Maine adults have a strong desire for a college degree but aren't pursuing one; and (5) 92% of Maine's population is within 25 miles of a technical college campus or center. This report proposes three actions to increase access to higher education in Maine: (1) increase enrollment in two-year technical colleges by expanding occupational and liberal arts programs and increasing investments in faculty and equipment; (2) add student advisors and expand remedial education opportunities; and (3) change the name of the Maine Technical College System to the Maine Community College System. (AUTH/EMH)

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The time is now

A Community College System For Maine

***"For our parents, college was a luxury.
For us, it was an opportunity. For our children, it's a necessity."***

John Fitzsimmons, President, Maine Technical College System

A proposal by the

**MAINE
TECHNICAL
COLLEGE
SYSTEM**

More Mainers need to go to college.

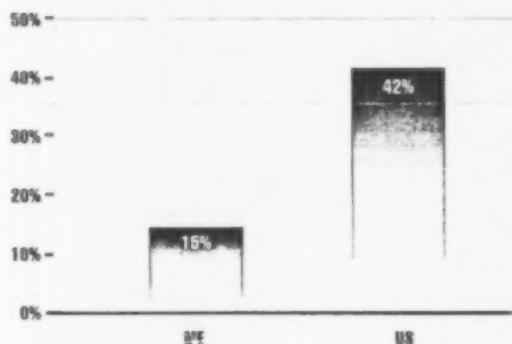
Higher education means higher incomes, greater opportunities, and for many, a better quality of life. Yet, too few people in Maine are going to college. In fact, we're below the national average and last in New England in college attainment.

Why aren't more of us going to college? Research shows that Maine's low college participation may be due in part to the low percentage of students enrolling in its public two-year colleges.

There is a growing consensus that one of the major factors in Maine's low college participation is the lack of a comprehensive community college system. Nationally, community colleges enroll *nearly half of all college students* and serve as a critical access point for working adults and low- and moderate-income students.

If Maine wants to raise income levels and provide its citizens with greater opportunities, we must bring a college degree within reach of more Maine people through a low cost community college system.

42% of U.S. undergraduates enroll in public two-year colleges, nearly triple Maine's rate



Source: Chronicle of Higher Education, from U.S. Department of Education Statistics (1999)

***Maine is one of only
a few states
in the nation without
a true community
college system.***

Maine employers need workers with college level skills.

College improves people's lives, but it also helps build a stronger economy. Maine companies need higher level skills to compete and grow. When companies look to relocate in Maine, or to expand, one of the top factors considered is access to skilled workers.

- 68% of Maine employers are having difficulty finding skilled workers; one in five are forced to recruit out of state.
- Six recent Maine studies have arrived at the same conclusion: increasing college attainment is an economic imperative.
- Jobs requiring an associate degree or higher are increasing by nearly twice the rate of growth of lower-skill jobs.
- Three studies conducted in the 1990's cited an insufficient supply of skilled workers educated at the two-year college level in Maine.

Maine's Technical Colleges are ready to be Maine's Community Colleges.

Fortunately, Maine has a solution within reach. Our technical colleges are virtually community colleges today. With some additional support and a few enhancements, we can fill the gap that is holding Maine back.

Community Colleges:

Two-year colleges — offering associate degrees, certificates and diplomas.

One- and two-year career and liberal arts programs — which prepare students for careers or for transfer to four-year colleges.

Transferable to a four-year baccalaureate degree.

Low cost access — typically half the price of a university, providing access to low- and moderate-income students.

Open admission and support services — which include academic and personal counseling, tutoring, career guidance and child care.

Accessible to adults through part-time and evening schedules.

Geographic access.

Workforce training for business and industry — as well as a broad array of credit and non-credit courses for lifelong learning and personal enrichment.

Maine's Technical Colleges:

- ✓ *Maine's technical colleges offer all academic credentials available at community colleges.*
- ✓ *Over 240 career programs are offered statewide. A liberal studies transfer degree was added in 1999.*
- ✓ *147 of 169 associate degree programs have transfer arrangements with four-year colleges.*
- ✓ *The technical colleges' tuition is \$68 per credit hour or approx. \$2,040 a year (plus fees), the lowest in Maine.*
- ✓ *The technical colleges' admission policies and support services are similar to community colleges. Developmental programs and student advising need to be strengthened.*
- ✓ *Half of all technical college courses are available evenings and weekends. 42% of students attend part time.*
- ✓ *Maine's seven technical colleges and 11 off-campus centers are within 25 miles of 92% of Maine's population.*
- ✓ *Workforce training and non-credit courses are delivered to over 10,000 Maine citizens annually.*

Maine's Associate in Arts Degree — a core offering of community colleges.

In 1999, the seven technical colleges added the Associate in Arts credential. In just three years, the program has grown to nearly 1,400 students.

The Associate in Arts:

- Allows students who are undecided on a career to begin taking foundation courses.
- Allows students with limited financial resources to complete the first two years of a baccalaureate degree at a reduced cost.
- Is a good starting place for those who need to strengthen their academic skills.
- Builds skills required in today's work environment, like oral and written communications, human relations and problem-solving skills.

Who will benefit from a formal community college system in Maine?

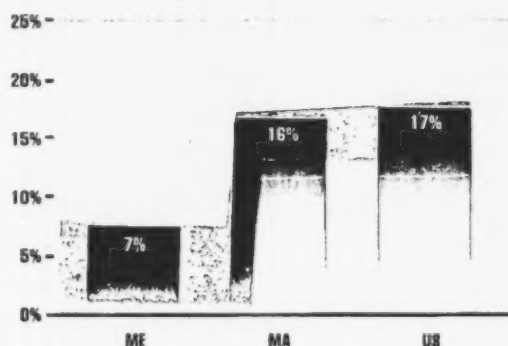
While all of Maine will benefit, a true community college system can open the door to higher education for two under-served groups — recent high school graduates and working adults who aspire to college but aren't following through.

Each year, 45% of Maine high school graduates (6,000 students) don't go on to college.

Maine is graduating high school students at a record rate. In fact, we're number one in the nation. So why are so many of our graduates not going to college? A recent study by the Mitchell Institute shows that there is high interest in college, but many don't follow through. Typically, students who don't go to college:

- have parents and siblings who didn't go
- are not in the top academic track in high school
- have not planned for college and have limited financial resources

Only 7% of recent high school graduates enroll in Maine's public two-year colleges, well below the national average



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1998)

"Children of the 21st century will need at least two years of post-secondary education."

National Commission on the High School Senior Year

90,000 Maine adults have a strong desire for a college degree, but aren't pursuing one.

Nationally, community colleges serve a large adult population, attracted by the low-cost, part-time schedules and career-oriented programs.

In Maine, where we lack a formal community college system, this success has not been fully realized. A recent study indicated that 90,000 Maine adults who want to obtain a college degree would find it easier if the following were provided; all are attributes of community colleges:

- low-cost tuition and financial assistance
- convenient geographic access and scheduling
- extra academic support
- small classes
- programs tied to the local job market

In other states, a large portion of the students who fit the profiles above would be enrolled in their local two-year community college.

- Students of lower socio-economic status are much more likely to attend a two-year college before going to a four-year college.
- More than half of community college students are first-generation college students.
- Nationally, three out of four college freshmen over age 23 attend community colleges.

A Community College System for Maine — The Plan.

To assure that our technical colleges effectively deliver community college services to Maine, three actions need to be taken:

1. 4,000 more college students by 2010:

To increase the annual enrollment of the colleges by 4,000 students (to about 11,000 annually), investments are needed in faculty and equipment. Both occupational and liberal arts programs will be expanded.

2. Strengthen student support:

Additional student advisors and remedial education will assure that students with diverse needs succeed in college.

3. Name change:

Legislation is needed to change the name of the Maine Technical College System to the Maine Community College System.

Investment:

**\$18.8 million over 7 years,
with an initial investment
of \$6.3 million in FY04-05.**

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council of Maine have endorsed the technical colleges becoming community colleges.

About community colleges.

- There are over 1,100 public and private community colleges in the U.S.
- Public community colleges enroll 42% of the nation's undergraduates
- Associate degrees represent 80% of community college credentials awarded nationally
- More than half of community college students are first-generation college students
- The majority of community college students are in-state residents
- Community college graduates typically stay in their state and communities after college
- Community colleges serve a large adult population, including laid-off workers and others seeking a change of career
- The average age of community college students is 29
- While most community colleges began with a focus on either career programs or transfer preparation, today, all but a few offer both career and transfer programs

Can Maine afford it?

Maine can't afford not to increase college attainment. Higher education means higher incomes. Higher incomes equal increased tax revenues and a stronger and more sustainable tax base. If Maine is to grow existing businesses and attract new, high-wage jobs to the state, a skilled and educated workforce is essential.

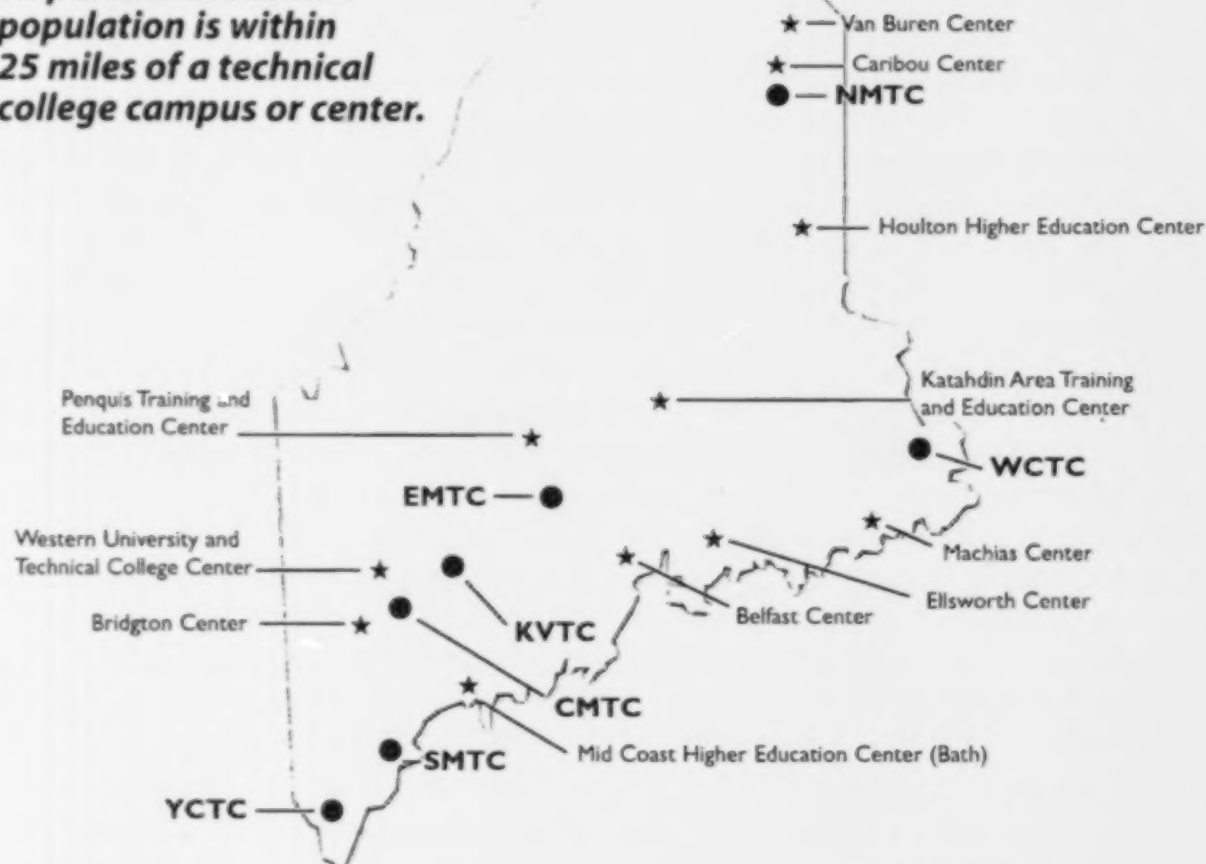
Maine spends at least \$35 million annually in research and development, and has invested millions more in bond issues and tax incentives to create good jobs for our citizens. Now it's time to invest in Maine people so they can acquire the skills needed for those jobs.

Get involved in Maine's future.

If you'd like to learn more or become involved in Maine's community college efforts, please visit our web site at www.mtcs.net. Or call Alice Kirkpatrick, Director of Public Affairs at 207-767-0116, ext. 3.

Success is near.

92 percent of Maine's population is within 25 miles of a technical college campus or center.



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★ 11 off-campus centers

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